

**THE HARP OF CANAAN OR
SELECTIONS
FROM THE BEST POETS
ON BIBLICAL SUBJECTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649599325

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Cover @ 2017

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BY

REV. J. DOUGLAS BORTHWICK

AUTHOR OF

"Cyclopedia of History & Geography," "The British American Reader,"
"The Battles of the World," &c., &c.

SECOND EDITION REVISED AND IMPROVED.

MONTREAL:
PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY GEO. E. DESBARATS,
At the Office of the "Canadian Illustrated News."

1871.

ENTERED according to Act of Parliament, in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy-one, by REV. JOHN DOUGLAS BOOTHMAN, in the office of the Minister of Agriculture.

Western Univ. Lib.

et.

6-17-1924

PREFACE.



OF all tasks which combine dignity with pleasure, and importance with cheering encouragement, there is none surely that can be compared to that of awakening in young people the perception and the enjoyment of poetry. It is the only branch of education in which three quarters of the work is done for us already. Yet, though it be at once the easiest and the most delightful of the teacher's duties, it has been, perhaps, in many instances the most neglected of all. To many, we have no doubt, the undertaking seems visionary and impracticable. Such will admit that it may be good, in an intellectual point of view, to make a child learn verses by heart, and right, in a moral and religious one, that he should be able to repeat hymns and religious poems; but to expect from him sympathy or pleasure in poetry as such, is, in their creed, to expect an impossibility. Hence, perhaps, it is that so little attention has been paid to the quality of the verses contained in books of poetry and elocution from which young people are to learn. Till very lately they were all but made up of the very refuse of the English language. What wonder, then, that children should have confirmed the theory which held poetical enjoyment to be impossible at their age!

If there be no valid objection to addressing the minds of children with poetry, let us study to do so, for there is all imaginable argument in its favour. Poetry is the *safest*, as it is the *highest exercise of the imagination*. The terrors to which that power so naturally does homage are shorn of their direst and most baleful aspects, when they are brought within the realm of beauty. Thoughts of awe will not so readily act as

PREFACE.

"night fears," when once they have moved "harmonious numbers." And to enjoy poetry at all, is always an exercise, however unconscious, of the intellect; so that by giving the imagination this its best and noblest outlet, we are making it help to strengthen, instead of, as it otherwise might, enfeeble the mind. Last of all, it is through poetry that religious truth most readily finds its way to the heart of "children and child-like souls;" this divine influence it is which enables us to sympathize with holy men of old. Sacred poetry is, after, of course, her creed, sacraments, liturgy, and ministry, the brightest possession of the Church—the richest pasturage of her children; eminently fitted, therefore, for her little ones, who, as yet, require none of her stern discipline; whose minds are all open to its gentle and holy inspiration; ready for truth when so presented to them as that they can livingly apprehend it, but incapable of giving it any cordial reception in the forms of logic, or the loveless antagonism of controversy.

For all these reasons, we say, cultivate in children a taste for poetry. It is hardly a labour to do so; and in as far as it is one, it is nearly sure to be richly rewarded.

J. DOUGLAS BORTHWICK.

June 1, 1871.



THE HARP OF CANAAN.

HISTORICAL INCIDENTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THE CREATION.

THE spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.
Th' unweari'd sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display;
And publishes to ev'ry land
The work of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the ev'ning shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the list'ning earth
Repeats the story of her birth:
While all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?
What though no real voice, nor sound,
Amidst their radiant orbs be found?
In Reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
For ever singing, as they shine,
"The hand that made us is Divine."

THE CREATION.

——MEANWHILE the Son

On His great expedition now appear'd,
 Girt with Omnipotence, with radiance crown'd
 Of Majesty Divine; sapience and love
 Immense, and all His Father in Him shone.
 About His chariot, numberless were pour'd
 Cherub, and seraph, potentates, and thrones,
 And virtues, wing'd spirits, and chariots wing'd
 From th' armory of God, where stand of old
 Myriads, between two brazen mountains lodg'd
 Against a solemn day, harness'd at hand,
 Celestial equipage! and now came forth
 Spontaneous, for within them spirit liv'd,
 Attendant on their Lord: heaven open'd wide
 Her ever-during gates, harmonious sound!
 On golden hinges moving, to let forth
 The King of Glory, in His powerful Word
 And Spirit coming to create new worlds.
 On heavenly ground they stood; and from the shore
 They view'd the vast immeasurable abyss,
 Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
 Up from the bottom turn'd by furious winds
 And surging waves, as mountains, to assault
 Heaven's height, and with the centre mix the pole.
 "Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou deep, peace!"
 Said then th' omnific Word; "your discord end:"
 Nor stay'd; but on the wings of cherubim
 Uplifted, in paternal glory rode
 Far into Chaos, and the world unborn;
 For Chaos heard His voice. Him all His train
 Follow'd in bright procession, to behold
 Creation, and the wonders of His might.
 Then stay'd the fervid wheels; and in His hand
 He took the golden compasses, prepar'd
 In God's eternal store, to circumscribe
 This universe, and all created things.
 One foot He center'd, and the other turn'd
 Round through the vast profundity obscure,
 And said, "Thus far extend, thus far thy bounds,
 This be thy just circumference, O world!"

THE FIRST SABBATH.

His finish'd He, and all that He had made,
View'd, and behold all was entirely good ;
So even and morn accomplish'd the sixth day :
Yet, not till the Creator, from His work
Desisting, though unwearied, up return'd,
Up to the heaven of heavens, His high abode ;
Thence to behold this new created world,
The addition of His empire, how it show'd
In prospect from His throne, how good, how fair,
Answering His great idea. Up He rode,
Follow'd with acclamation, and the sound
Symphonious of ten thousand harps that tuned
Angelic harmonies ; the earth, the air
Resounded (thou remember'st, for thou heard'st,)
The heavens and all the constellations rung,
The planets in their station listening stood,
While the bright pomp ascended jubilant.
" Open, ye everlasting gates ! " they sung,
" Open, ye heavens, your living doors ; let in
" The great Creator from His work return'd
" Magnificent, His six days' work, a world ;
" Open, and henceforth oft ; for God will deign
" To visit oft the dwellings of just men,
" Delighted ; and with frequent intercourse
" Thither will send His winged messengers
" On errands of supernal grace."—So sung
The glorious train ascending : He through heaven,
That open'd wide her blazing portals, led
To God's eternal house direct the way ;
A broad and ample road, whose dust is gold,
And pavement stars, as stars to thee appear
Seen in the galaxy, that milky-way
Which nightly, as a circling zone, thou seest
Powder'd with stars. And now on earth the seventh
Evening rose in Eden, for the sun
Has set, and twilight from the east came on,
Forerunning night ; when at the holy mount
Of heaven's high-seated top, the imperial throne
Of Godhead fixed for ever firm and sure,
The Filial Power arrived, and sat Him down
With His great Father there ; and, from His work
Now resting, bless'd and hallow'd the seventh day.
As resting on that day from all His work.
But not in silence holy kept : the harp
Had work and rested not ; the solemn pipe,
And dulcimer, all organs of sweet stop,